Not Militarism But Safety Is the French Answer to Wilson

Continental Nations Feel They Have Been Deserted by Their Anglo-Saxon Allies

By Frank H. Simonds

PRESIDENT WILSON'S bitter comment upon the present state of French affairs and the open charge that a militaristic party is now in control in the counsels of France has its origin in the developments of the Paris Conference, where he encountered the demand of France for security against Germany. This security, for the present as for every other generation of Frenchmen, is represented by the Rhine barrier.

It is an odd fact, characteristic of both Anglo-Saxon nations, that while each is obdurate in its insistence upon the maintenance of those circumstances which mean security for it, they can agree in regarding as immoral similar demands by their neighbors or allies. Thus, the British have, from the very outset of their history, sought and maintained the supremacy of the sea, which was essential to their existence as an island people, while the United States has more and more inclined to fortifying the Monroe Doctrine, which has the same value. But at Paris the British and the Americans united to block the French desire for the Rhine barrier.

Guaranties of Safety

Moreover, because of the maintenance of sea supremacy, Britain has not been invaded in centuries, while the United States has escaped all foreign incursion, save in the case of the British in the War of 1812, largely because no European nation has had adequate bases for such an operation. In 1865, when Napoleon III was seeking to establish Maximilian in Mexico, the United States intervened peremptorily, and the result was the execution of Maximilian and the collapse of the Napoleonic scheme.

Now, in the century between 1814 and 1914 the French have been invaded by the Prussians and Germans four times. Each invasion has been marked by the seizure of French territory—half the Sarre Basin in 1814, the other half in 1815; Alsace-Lorraine in 1871, and, finally, in 1914, the German plans envisaged forcible annexation of everything from the Briey Basin to the Channel ports, all France north of the Somme and east of the Meuse, including the fortified barrier from Verdun to Belfort.

The attacks of 1870 and 1914 were entirely unprovoked and purely predatory. Further than this, from 1871 to 1918 France has existed in hourly peril as a result of German menace, which was translated into German invasion and devastation in August, 1914. As a consequence France came to the peace conference seeking, as a guaranty against new attacks and new devastations, that Rhine barrier which Marshal Foch and every other soldier of prominence from the days of Cæsar regarded as the single insurance against Teutonic invasions.

In the Paris Conference Britain, which had taken the German fleet and all the German colonies as a guaranty against any German menace to her; and the United States, which, through President Wilson, demanded that the Monroe Doctrine be recognized as the law of the world, both promptly vetoed the French demands for security at the Rhine. France found herself after her sacrifices, which surpassed those of all other Allied and associated nations, abandoned by her friends at the supreme crisis.

League to Guard France

In terms, the French were told that the league of nations was a sure guaranty against German aggression. But when the French sought to clothe the league of nations with real power by providing it with an active army both the United States and Great Britain objected, and both nations emphasized their objections by promptly withdrawing the great bulk of their armies which had been serving in France, leaving the burden of the task to France alone.

France then refused categorically to resign the Rhine barrier, Clemenceau acting with a written opinion of Foch in his hands, and a deadlock resulted, a deadlock in which the President had recourse to the George Washington threat. Still the French did not and could not yield and the President finally agreed to that Treaty of Insurance by which the United States and Great Britain promised to defend France if Germany attempted a new invasion. Then the French dropped the Rhine barrier claim but continued in accordance with the treaty provisions to hold the Rhine as a surety of German performance.

Now a situation has arisen in which the Treaty of Insurance has practically expired. There is no hope of its indorsement in the United States, and British approval was conditioned on American acceptance. Thus the thing taken by the French as a substitute no longer exists. Moreover, British and American armies have been demobilized so rapidly that there is no longer any considerable resource for prompt reinforcement of the French, even if the United States and Britain, without treaty obligation, should decide to go to French assistance in the face of a new German attack.

Finally, and the circumstance is of major importance, the Germans are not performing the contract accepted by them under the treaty, and the failure to perform was recognized as warranting the extension of French occupation of the Rhine barrier. Therefore the situation comes down to this: France's allies have failed to make good the guaranty which France accepted as a substitute for the right to hold the Rhine barrier. Germany has failed to perform under the treaty, and this supplies justification for indefinite occupation by France of the Rhine regions.

One more circumstance, highly important for Americans to note: France has recently had a general election followed by a Presidential election. Unlike the British election of 1918—the famous, or notorious, "khaki" election—the French vote followed long after the ending of fighting and was, therefore, in no considerable degree influenced by war emotions or passions. Rather, the problems and program for the future were passed upon by the French electorate.

Militaristic Ideals

Now, if it be true that the militaristic elements have gained control of France, as the President charges, this is due to the fact that France as a nation has adopted militaristic ideals, for the men now in charge of French policy have only recently received their mandates from the French people. It must be conceded, then, to sustain the President's argument, that France has become a militaristic nation. Similarly, the Italian leaders, whom the President also assails, represent a new Parliament and are the selections of a recent appeal to the people. Italy, too, has gone "militaristic" on the same showing.

But any such assumption carries with it the immediate doom of the whole idea of the league of nations, which was based upon the assertion that the people, as opposed to their leaders, were done with the old ideas of balance of power, militarism, etc. If France and Italy—and, for that matter, Poland, Rumania and all Continental nations—have become militaristic, then there is an end of all chance of any real settlement on new lines.

The Facts

Of course, the fact is quite otherwise. France, Italy, Rumania and Poland, to go no further—the peoples of these countries, who have recently been consulted and are now represented by men lately called to office—are concerned with achieving that security which the more fortunate Anglo-Saxon peoples have been able to achieve or maintain by the war. The real quarrel lies between the Continent and the Anglo-Saxon nations, which, never for a single moment consenting to surrender their own policies of self-defense, are demanding that France, Italy and the rest shall take the Anglo-Saxon plan, which is completely satisfactory to Britain and to the United States, but leaves the French, the Poles, the Italians and the Rumanians exposed to invasion. And while this demand is reiterated British and American events more and more tend to demonstrate that the peoples of these two countries are totally unwilling to accept any burdens incident to the possible perils that may result for the Continental nations.

It is possible to see in the various disputes in Asia Minor the conflict between imperialistic aspirations. France, Britain and Italy are seeking in the old Turkish Empire to attain selfish ends and to acquire territory which, however it may prosper under a new régime, can hardly be regarded as any more necessary to the security of its present claimants than were the Philippines to American safety in 1898. Italy at Adalia, France in Cilicia, Britain everywhere from Cairo to Constantinople—all are seeking to fortify or to create new imperial domains.

But in Europe the situation is quite different. In the case of France there is a very great majority, including a number of the best French journalists, which disapproves of the new extension of French occupation to the eastern end of the Mediterranean, feeling that in North Africa France has a sufficient field for colonial development and a field henceforth removed from the center of international rivalries. American criticism of French excursions into the Near East would arouse a chorus of approval in France, provided only that similar criticism were directed against the similar excursions of the other nations.

By contrast, all Frenchmen equally demand security on the north and against Germany. It is a fact that Clemenceau acquired the support and won the approval of his fellow countrymen when for a policy of indefinite occupation or actual annexation he substituted that of renunciation, based upon an Anglo-French-American Treaty of Insurance. All things considered, this appealed to Frenchmen as providing security without creating any new Alsace-Lorraine, and the French have a very keen memory of the circumstances of the Treaty of Frankfort and an inevitable repulsion for the idea of bringing to the Palais Bourbon a protesting delegation such as represented Alsace-Lorraine in Berlin after 1871.

But Clemenceau could not have obtained any support in the nation for a policy of unconditional renunciation. If only Americans could once understand what the German menace meant to the French before the war, if only more of them could see what German invasion actually meant to the French from 1914 to 1918, the feeling of the people of France in the matter of the Rhine barrier would be clearly and sympathetically grasped. As it is, this desire for security is described as militarism and as imperialism by so-called "liberals" in Britain and in the United States because it conflicts with their notion of an ideal settlement based upon the sacrifice by all the countries except Great Britain and the United States of things that mean life or death to these Continental nations.

An American Parallel

If one cares to find an American parallel for the French sentiment in the matter of the Rhine barrier it is easily to be discovered in the colonial history of America. French rule in Canada carried with it extreme and continual menace to the British settlements in New England and in New York. French and Indian raiding parties frequently descended the Hudson and Connecticut valleys, and invasion from the north was an enduring danger. As a consequence the Colonies practically demanded of Britain the extinction of French rule in Canada. But even before this colonial sentiment demanded one restriction after another of French territory as a result of each war.

Now, it was not militarism or imperialism which animated our ancestors; it was the desire for security, the necessity to escape from an intolerable situation, out of which came frequent tragedies, the destruction of settlements and the murder of colonists. To imagine that the inhabitants of New England or of northern New York, in the middle of the eighteenth century, were militarists, although they habitually carried arms and were frequently engaged in actual warfare, is to imagine an absurdity.

Yet America went to Paris and proclaimed that it was the moral duty of the French, who had been four times invaded within a century, each time with tragic consequences for themselves, to lay aside all safeguards against a fifth invasion and trust entirely in the paper guaranties of the league of nations and the abiding faith of American representatives at Paris that the world had entered into a new age, a golden age of peace, in which the Germans had become gentle and the Prussians were no longer predatory. A refusal by the Continental countries to accept this view was forthwith denounced as reactionary, militaristic. The discovery of this reluctance was the signal for the beginning of that storm of denunciation of Europe which has continued in America ever since.

Is This Idealism?

Meantime, in the United States, for many months, there has been going on a debate, a struggle, designed beyond all else to protect America against any possible dangers or responsibilities incident to the Treaty of Versailles. We have asked the French to retire from the Rhine barrier and run the risk of a new invasion; our President is now denouncing the present government of France as militaristic because of its objection to such a course, yet, for months, we have devoted endless attention to the framing of sentences and the selection of words to insure our own immunity, not, be it understood, to invasion, but merely to more or less imaginary responsibility.

Is it any wonder that Frenchmen, Italians, Poles, Continental Europeans generally, regard the two Anglo-Saxon nations with amazement and a measure of scorn? One hears frequently, one heard all the time at Paris, of American idealism, but what does this idealism consist of? From the European viewpoint, in a willingness to expose France to invasion, Italy to insecurity, Poland to partition, without the smallest risk on our part, merely to impose upon the world a system which Americans believe will abolish all war.

As for the English, on their side they have a definite object in mind. They are seeking an actual Anglo-American alliance. It may be that this is the best thing that can occur; it may be that a partnership between these two countries is the most efficacious guaranty to the peace of the world and the prosperity of the two nations most concerned. But it ought clearly to be recognized in America that it is not profound faith in the American program, absolute conviction in the efficacy of the league of nations, which moves the British to support the American President in each separate encounter with the Continent. On the contrary, it is purely and simply a pursuit of exactly that security which France is seeking at the Rhine, Italy on the Adriatic, Poland at the Pripet, Rumania along the Dniester.

Moreover, while President Wilson demanded that all the Continental nations should make great sacrifices, he permitted the British to exclude from debate the question of the freedom of the seas. While he challenged the right of the French to occupy permanently any territory in Europe outside of their frontier in 1870, he consented to the occupation by Britain indefinitely in Africa of enormous German colonies and has raised no protest yet over British occupation of Mesopotamia, Palestine and Persia.

Right of War

Yet if this is not imperialism, what is? If it is not militarism, how can one describe the French desire for the Rhine barrier as militaristic? I should like to be very clear on this point. British occupation of German South West and East Africa, of the British share of the Togo and of the Kamerun, of German islands in the Pacific, does not offend me. I recognize that it is a right earned by war and a necessity imposed by the German policy of building in these colonies bases for future attacks upon British colonies. Equally warranted is the destruction of the German fleet, which directly menaced Britain, and the allocation to Britain of the larger portion of the German fleet.

But recognizing British rights in this field of legitimate British interest, I am bound to see that there is similarly opened an analogous field for Continental interests. I want to see all the nations associated with the United States in the recent war against Germany not only compensated for their undeserved losses, so far as it is possible, but similarly protected against new losses and fresh aggressions.

The difficulty is that America at Paris began by conceding the justice of all the British contentions, which was unexceptionable, and then, as if in reward for this course, enlisted British assistance in reducing the similar claims of all the other European nations. From Saarbrücken to Danzig, from Coblenz to Bendery, Americans and Englishmen have stood shoulder to shoulder in a fight to reduce the claims of the French, the Poles, the Italians, the Rumanians, which had every bit as sound warrant in history and in justice as the British claim to New Guinea.

French militarism is nothing more than British navalism—a desire to provide the proper bases for national security. But we placed British navalism outside the discussion at Paris, and properly, I believe. Still, in Paris and since Paris America has been deluged with denunciations, domestic and English, of French militarism and Italian imperialism; the unhappy Poles, striving for reunion after a century and a half of slavery, have been tagged chauvinistic for desiring to hold real estate at their doors by British journals which solemnly accept, as of right, British annexations all over the world.

Sees Us as Catspaw

All of which leads to one thing. America seems to the Continent a British catspaw or a partner of the British in a scheme of world exploitation. The French and the Italians believe that it is for our own pecuniary profit that we have interfered in their affairs, that we have vetoed their aspirations or their pursuit of what they deem security while holding our hands in every case where a British interest was affected. And the last year has seen the multiplication of causes for European distrust and dislike for the country which, on November 11, 1918, was held in something approaching veneration by millions and millions of Europeans.

To-day the Greek wonders why America vetoes his desire to hold Hellenic Thrace, refuses him Koritsa and his Epirote frontiers, while we unhesitatingly assign to the British colonies in which the population is either German or native. The Rumanian speculates on our unyielding hostility to his occupation of Bessarabia, Rumanian by tongue and tradition; the Italian ponders on American veto to all his projects; the Frenchman speculates upon American denunciation of his aspirations for security when the map of Asia, and even more of Africa, shows the British color, with American approval, newly applied to territories vastly in excess of the area of France, of Italy, of all of our European associates combined.

What Would We Do?

Moreover, at Paris we insisted that the Rumanian and the Jugo-Slav should consent to the vesting in the league of nations of the authority to interfere in the domestic affairs of these nations on behalf of minorities. But would America even listen to a proposal that the league of nations should have the right to interfere in American affairs on behalf of the negro? No; here again we insisted upon our own immunity to the principles we championed and imposed on other nations. We were tremendously solicitous of the rights of the Jews in Poland, but we met the Japanese demand for the abolition of color distinctions, which struck the Japanese with enduring humiliation, with an immediate and emphatic rebuff. And the Europeans, the French, for example, who have no color prejudice and no anti-Japanese sentiment, looked on in cynical amazement at this new Anglo-Saxon revelation, this ultimate demonstration of the meaning of the "American crusade."

The simple truth is that militarism in France, navalism in Britain, Monroeism in the United States, all represent the same underlying seeking after security, the desire to erect barriers along the known pathway of danger, which for the French is the Rhine, for the British the sea, for America Europe and Asia. No idealism, however genuine, will lead any nation to open its frontiers to invasion or to miss the chance to fortify itself against further invasion when the enemy has already come and been beaten.

Wilson's Bargains

In Paris we demanded in advance that the world should accept our Monroeism, then we agreed with the British to exclude from question their navalism and finally we demanded and obtained from the British invaluable assistance in an assault upon the militarism on the Continent of France, Italy, Rumania, Poland, etc. But because their militarism represented a national instinct, every bit as deeply rooted as our respective national policies, the French, Italian, Polish and Rumanian peoples rallied to their governments or to the policies of their governments. As a result Mr. Wilson had to buy French resignation of the Rhine by the promise of an Anglo-American military guaranty; he failed to win Italian resignation, and outside of Europe he had to yield to the Japanese on the matter of Shantung.

If we are to engage in European affairs we shall have first of all to recognize certain facts, to accept them, not to attempt to obliterate them by the sheer force of our so-called idealistic conceptions. We shall have to perceive the similarity between the three dominant conceptions of militarism, navalism and Monroeism. We shall either have to discard our instinct, invite the British to set aside theirs and then appeal to the Continent to lay down its, or we shall have to recognize all three as permanent and always to be reckoned with.

And one last word: We shall have to avoid giving inevitable offense by the assumption that while our own policy of national interest is holy, that of others is shot through with original sin. Just now our reputation for hypocrisy in Europe is Alpine in its proportions.

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Britain Has Its Naval Supremacy and the U. S. Insists Upon the Monroe Doctrine

Old-Fashioned Singing School Becomes Americanization Aid

WOMEN members of the People's Liberty Chorus, made up of persons of all nationalities, which is teaching Americanization by singing

ADAMS, Athenas, Auchmuty, Barseaux, Beebe, Bossong, Capalino, Cerruti, Chrzanowska, Daoust, Dembrowski, Denemonsties, Eichinger, Eschwei, Escalante, Gillespie, Goldstein, Goyette, Hujber, Hankiewica, Howard, Kretschmer, Kieley, King, Leitenberger, Ligowska, Lipski, McCauley, Murphy, Mullineaux, Nickel, Nebras, Nut, O'Shaughnessy, Oswald, Obstarczyk, Polkawski, Peacock, Piotrowski, Rosenberger, Reboli, Rybicki, Sudhoff, Solmons, Szaba, Terradell, Thompson, Thayer, Uanry, Ussher, Underhill, Wohltjin, Waters, Wunk, Zielinski, Zabawezeck, Zonzs — these names drawn at random from the card index of the People's Liberty Chorus are also an index to the various nationalities that are being brought together and molded into a happy, harmonious family through the joy they derive from singing together.

There are thousands of names in the card index quite as unpronounceable as most of these. There are also good old New England names and those of early New York families. There are a few members of the chorus, a very few, who were actually born in New York! And in this rapidly growing chorus all come together with but one thought—that all are Americans!

As for the democracy of the organization its personnel includes lawyers, doctors, clergymen, retired business men, electricians, clerks and day laborers among the men. And there is also one editor and several traveling salesman, while the vice-chairman of Advanced Unit No. 1, D. F. Collins, is a young exporter. The treasurer of this unit is Fred Rosendale, an expert accountant for the American Paper Company.

As to the women who make up the chorus, they are clerks, school teachers, trained nurses, stenographers, saleswomen, girls in service and mothers of families, who come after the day's care for recreation and the refreshment that comes from singing together. There are also a number of women from well known families who come because they love to sing and because they are interested in the real democracy that the organization is fostering. The secretary of the unit, Miss Estelle Chamberlain, comes from an old New York family. Another member is the wife of Marshall Field's former foreign representative. She has lived in all the capitals of Europe and studied under famous teachers and all this experience she has brought to the People's Liberty Chorus for its enrichment. Asked what she gets out of the chorus for herself, she replied:

"It is America to me, and I have lived long enough in Europe to appreciate America."

No wonder that her favorite recitation, for she is a well known reader at various city clubs, is Dr. Henry van Dyke's poem entitled "America for Me!"

Speaking of Dr. van Dyke, it was he who first understood the possibilities of the People's Liberty Chorus, or, as L. Camilieri, its leader and originator, would say "My idea." About the time that Europe went to war Mr. Camilieri, who was at that time a stranger in America, was strenuously devoting himself to the reading of American literature in an effort to become acquainted with the English language, which he spoke very badly. Among other things he came across a volume of Dr. van Dyke's poems and found there the "Peace Hymn of the Republic." It impressed him so that he was inspired to set it to music. When Dr. van Dyke heard his poem sung with Mr. Camilieri's setting he asked him to call on him. The result was that these two poets, artists, idealists, knew each other and understood each other at once, and from that moment Dr. van Dyke pledged his support to the movement and became its honorary chairman, and has remained so, preaching its gospel on all occasions. Recently, on the occasion of the organization's first concert in Carnegie Hall, Dr. van Dyke made a stirring speech in its behalf, in which he dwelt on the value of singing for the promotion of the happiness of the people.

On this same occasion Mr. Camilieri, who has the fondness of most Latins for speechmaking, surprised his audience by suddenly facing them in the conductor's stand and making a speech in which he put the following question:

"Why is it that scientists are making such strenuous efforts to become acquainted with the inhabitants of Mars, while the inhabitants of this earth are still such strangers to each other?"

Nothing could have been a better plea for what the People's Liberty Chorus is doing and has been doing for the last four years for the people of this city. The audience got the point immediately and applauded wildly.

And they say Americans don't love to sing! There was probably never a greater fallacy than this common statement that Americans don't like to sing. Singing among Americans generally has not been cultivated. On the other hand, no other country has had the market so flooded with instruments of the 'canned music" variety. This and the fact that there has been little constructive effort to develop a love of singing has had a tendency to develop the spirit of "letting George do it"—George being the artist who sang into the Victrola. The industry of the "canned music" manufacturer has not generally been counteracted by industry on the part of those who could develop a love among the people of producing their own music by means of their own voices.

This is just what the People's Liberty Chorus has been doing without intermission for nearly four years. There has never been a week during this entire time when there has not been at least one meeting of the organization at some one of its centers, generally in the High School of Commerce, on West Sixty-fifth Street.

The question has perhaps arisen in the reader's mind as to how the organization is financed. So far a few good friends—a very few—have seen the possibilities of the organization and put up enough money to give the general public a chance to realize its value as a great civic organization of the people.

Since its organization nearly four years ago the People's Liberty Chorus has appeared in twenty-three civic and patriotic events. One unit of three hundred voices has advanced enough artistically to have made a creditable début in Carnegie Hall last month. On next Friday evening this unit will give its second concert in Carnegie Hall, assisted by a symphony orchestra of sixty men from the New Symphony Orchestra Inc. of the Musicians' New Orchestra Society.